

TAITA FALCON *FALCO FASCIINUCHA* FROM THE GOL MOUNTAINS, TANZANIA

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On 1 March 1977, during a visit to the Gol Mountains, situated along the north-eastern boundary of the Serengeti National Park in northern Tanzania, I saw a Taita Falcon *Falco fasciinucha* perched on Nasera Rock, a rounded granite inselberg about 150 m high and rising separately from the south-western side of the Gol range.

The bird remained perched approximately 50-100 m above the ground throughout the 15-20 min of observations, and I was able to compare it with the many Lanner Falcons *F. biarmicus* that were present at the time. The Taita Falcon was noticeably smaller with a darker slate-blue mantle and chestnut nape, as opposed to the more extensive chestnut-coloured head of the Lanners which also were noticeably larger and lighter in colour.

Other birds of prey seen on or around Nasera Rock on this date were Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron perennipertus*, Lammergeyer *Gypaetus barbatus*, Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*, Verreaux's Eagle *A. verreauxi*, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Greater Kestrel *F. rupicoloides*.

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A TAITA FALCON *FALCO FASCIINUCHA* IN TSAVO

Hermann Pelchen

On 12 July 1977 at about 07.30 hrs I was having breakfast at Banda No.1 of Ngulia Safari Camp in Tsavo National Park (West), when a rather small falcon dashed towards the waterhole. I first thought it was an African Hobby *Falco cuvieri*, but then the falcon sat down at the dead tree closest to the bandas and with my 40x telescope I could realize immediately that it was a Taita Falcon *F. fasciinucha*. There was a very broad moustachial stripe as in the Peregrine *F. peregrinus*, which neither the Lanners *F. biarmicus* nor the hobbies *F. subbuteo* and *cuvieri* have, a brownish-black crown and two very distinct chestnut patches at either side of the nape, joined by a slightly paler and narrower horizontal band, below which there were two more parallel but paler chestnut stripes running down the hind neck. Eyelids, cere, feet and toes were yellow, bill bluish grey with blackish tip. Above (only seen from the side) it was brownish grey and below buffish white at the throat, and from the chest to under tail-coverts pinkish chestnut with few very small, and two bigger, dark spots at the flanks. The tail was rather short, giving an owl-like appearance to the body from some angles. When flying off at eye-level, the rump looked rather pale in comparison to the rest of the upper-parts.

After a short while the falcon took off high into the air and, at a distance, it stooped at a swallow or swift but missed it and returned to another tree at the side of the banda. Professor N. Skinner and his wife happened to be in one of the other bandas and I called them to witness. After quite a while the bird took off again but only to sit down on the original tree where we could study it thoroughly. Eventually it took off again, high